

TESTIMONY OF REP. JOE NEGUSE
HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES
MEMBER DAY

INTRO

- Thank you Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop for the opportunity to testify on some of my priorities in the Natural Resources Committee's Jurisdiction. I am proud to be a member of this committee and work on some of the most pressing issues facing my constituents and the country.

PUBLIC LANDS

- One of those pressing topics is the protection of our public lands. In total, 57% of my district is made up of public land - almost 3 million acres. Additionally, Colorado's second district contains the White River National Forest, the country's most visited national forest. From camping and hiking, to skiing and snow shoeing, my constituents deeply care about access to public lands.
- That's why I am so proud to have introduced the Colorado Outdoor Recreation and Economy Act, or CORE Act. This bill would protect 400,000 acres of some of Colorado's most scenic and treasured landscapes. The CORE Act would expand conservation of the stunning San Juan Mountains, formally establish the boundaries to protect the Curecanti National Recreation Area, and provide protections for a number of wilderness and recreation areas within the White River National Forest along the Continental Divide.
- In recognition of the incredible contributions of the Army's historic 10th Mountain Division, this bill would also designate the first ever National Historic Landscape at Camp Hale. By protecting this important place, we can create an opportunity for current and future generations to learn about the history of the 10th Mountain Division in the ultimate victory of WWII and the creation of today's ski and outdoor industry.
- The CORE Act also includes a permanent withdrawal of approximately 200,000 acres from future oil and gas development in the Thompson Divide,

while preserving existing private property rights for leaseholders and landowners. At the request of local counties and energy producers, the bill includes a program to lease and generate energy from excess methane in existing or abandoned coal mines in the North Fork Valley, supporting the local economy and addressing climate change.

- While I'm very proud of what is included in the CORE Act, I'm equally proud of how the bill was crafted. For over a decade, folks from a wide variety of coalitions, businesses, counties, towns, and communities have come together to find the solutions that protect our public lands and preserve our storied history.
- The CORE Act represents the embodiment of what Coloradans value, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in moving the bill through the legislative process. I believe that we can all agree on the value of protecting our public lands.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

- And as I know my colleagues on both sides of the aisle also believe, the protection and designation of our public lands is just as important as our maintenance of those places. It's important that each family visiting national parks on vacation have a memorable and safe experience – just as I did growing up visiting Rocky Mountain National Park.
- H.R. 1225, The Restore Our Parks and Public Lands Act, would help us to do just that. This bipartisan legislation, led by my colleagues Ranking Member Bishop and Representative Derek Kilmer, would establish a federal fund to address maintenance backlogs within our natural parks and public lands. Thousands of Americans travel to visit these beautiful places every year and funding the proper maintenance of our national parks is critically important to my district and our nation. I urge movement on this important bill.

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

- Not only is Colorado's second district home to many of our nation's greatest public lands, it is also home to many of our nation's most outstanding scientific institutions: world class universities such as CU Boulder and Colorado State University, innovative federal labs and cooperative institutes, and leading private industry companies.

- With such a heavy concentration of scientific innovation and discovery in the district, I am dedicated to protecting the freedom of science to be done free of political interference.
- I share the concerns of many of my colleagues around this administration's attempts to stifle, intimidate, or ignore sound science. Just last week, scientists at the U.S. Geological Survey were directed to use computer generated models that only project climate change impacts through 2040, while they previously modeled impacts through 2100.
- As we are all aware, the largest impacts of climate change will be felt past the year 2040. Preventing scientists from studying the full impacts of climate change is not only an issue of scientific integrity, it is misleading to the American public. Our nation's federal science agencies are world leaders in research and innovation. Limiting their ability to complete their work and share it is a profound mistake. I hope the committee will work to address these concerns.

SRS

- I also want to mention the Secure Rural Schools program, or SRS. The program is a primary source of funding for schools, mountain search and rescue, road maintenance and other services that Coloradans rely. Last week, I was proud to introduce bipartisan legislation with Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers to ensure rural schools receive the benefits of this program through the next fiscal year. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure this bipartisan, bicameral legislation is passed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Finally, as we know in my home state of Colorado, the impacts of climate change have already begun to affect and threaten our way of life. Devastating wildfires, increased flooding and erosion, rising temperatures and faster snowmelt all have real-life consequences to my constituency and to our public lands and wildlife. It is more important than ever that we take steps to increase our resiliency to climate change—through soil health practices, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and creating a more resilient energy grid, and empowering individuals to find new and innovative solutions to the largest problem we currently face. We must take decisive action now to protect our planet and future generations. I am dedicated to work with my colleagues on this committee as well as the Select Committee

on the Climate Crisis in finding tangible solutions to address this historic challenge.

CLOSING

- Thank you, Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop, for this opportunity share some of my priorities within the jurisdiction of the committee. I look forward to working with both of you on all of these topics.